

**Central South Consortium**  
**Report for Joint Committee**  
**Draft Business Plan Proposals**

**Author:** Hannah Woodhouse, Isos Partnership

**Purpose of the report**

1. The Welsh Government task and finish group which has followed the publication of the Hill report has indicated that it expects a draft business case for each consortium by the end of February 2014.
2. This report covers a detailed paper which is the first draft of such a business case for Welsh Government. The recommendations will be presented to Joint Committee within a presentation which will set out the details of the draft national model alongside proposals for the shape and operation of Central South Consortium.
3. It would be helpful if the joint committee would signal whether the direction of travel is broadly right or areas for further work. The final business case will be brought back to the committee in February for final approval.

**Background**

4. The national model which is due to be released after Christmas, sets out the shape of consortium working following the Hill report and has been developed collectively by a task and finish group including representatives from across Wales.
5. The model is helpful clarity in the expectations of Welsh Government of the consortia function. The latest draft model detailed a number of areas, namely:
  - a. The model and key principles of school improvement and the role of consortia
  - b. The scope of regional consortia
  - c. Delivery of respective regional consortia and local authority functions
  - d. Governance and Accountability
  - e. The organisation and operation of consortia working,
  - f. Funding and finance.
6. The national model does indicate an expectation to bring together a number of wider LA functions to be delivered collectively across the region. This includes HR advice to schools, governor support and 14-19 strategy and implementation.
7. The national model is not yet publicly available. We will present a high level summary of our understanding of the national model as it stands at the Joint Committee for discussion. However, we expect that Welsh Government will continue to require all consortia to set out their plans in a business plan against the national model criteria by the end of February 2014.

## **Summary**

8. The attached paper sets out the direction of travel for Central South Consortium. It covers:
  - g. A draft vision for school improvement in the region and success measures. This will be used to develop an overarching strategic plan for the consortium.
  - h. A set of governance recommendations through which accountability and decision making will operate. If agreed this will form the basis upon which decisions are made from April. It will also form the basis of a new legal agreement which will need to be signed by all parties.
  - i. A set of recommendations about the way that the Consortium will deliver capacity and impact in its school improvement activities across the region. If these are broadly agreed, this will form the basis of a restructure consultation for staff within the consortium. The results of this consultation will come to Joint committee in February for final agreement before implementation.
  - j. The basis of performance monitoring and reporting at all levels across the region. The final performance monitoring framework will take account of individual local authority commissioning conversations which will take place in January.
9. The final business case will also include proposals about the final budgetary position for the consortium for 14/15, the resourcing of staffing and the organisation and the balance of budget to be used to support school improvement against expectations for delegated SEG. Welsh government haven't yet issued the final confirmed budget position for consortia in 14/15. There are a number of complexities about how the resources for functions in some consortia but not others are counted. We do expect a higher proportion of the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) to be delegated and that retained SEG will be passed largely wholesale to the consortium in 14/15 to agree distribution with local authority partners and schools. Our model needs to take account of this. We will continue to work through these issues, bringing proposals and the costed model to Directors in the first instance in January.
10. The final business case will also include proposed timescales for the additional functions to be delivered collectively across the region. Directors will each be responsible for leading on one of these functions on behalf of the consortium and will agree proposals, costings and transition planning in the New Year.

## **Recommendations**

11. We recommend that the Joint Committee comment on the proposals set out in the attached paper under the sections marked 'recommendations'. A summary of these are attached at Annex A.
12. It would be helpful if Members could signal whether the direction of travel is broadly right and whether they are content for staff to continue to work up both the governance, legal agreements and structure documents which will flow from these proposals. The final business case including legal agreement and structure proposals will be brought to the Joint Committee for decision.

## **Annex A: Summary of draft recommendations for CSC Business Case**

### **Section 1: Vision recommendations**

1. That Members comment on the vision for the region in the longer term and the commissioning expectations for consortium delivery in 14/15. These will form the basis of the commissioning plan at the front of the business case.

### **Section 2: Governance recommendations**

2. That legal responsibility for the Central South Consortium rests with the Joint Committee CSC, and that the Joint Committee meets termly with a focus on the Consortium's business plan, budget and performance;
3. That membership of the Joint Committee consists of Leaders from each local authority (with the normal powers to delegate as appropriate), with support from a lead Chief Executive for the region;
4. That there remains a lead Chief Executive for the region and a Lead Director who come from different authorities and that both roles rotate every 12 months;
5. That an Executive Board is agreed for the Consortium and membership is sought from the 'approved pool' and that the Executive Board starts to meet in shadow form in early January;
6. That local authorities will jointly commission the consortium through a business plan which will set out a summary of performance; the priorities for improvement, work programmes and functions to be undertaken in the 14/15 year, supported by budget costings; and the measurable improvement in schools' performance to be achieved over the 12 months. That this is provided to the Welsh Government by the end of February;
7. That local authority annexes are agreed to the same timescale, there will be a named senior challenge advisor for each local authority who will be responsible for delivering this commissioning agreement and be held accountable for it and that each director will meet with the senior management team of the Consortium to review progress in each local authority and agree their business plan annex;
8. That Directors of Education continue to provide a steering group function meeting regularly with the Managing Director and rotate the lead Director role annually;
9. That the advisory panels of schools and governors are set up to include heads and governors who are nominated by each local authority as per the national model and who are responsible for communicating with the wider body of heads as well as feeding in views;
10. That there is no joint scrutiny function but that the Managing Director of the Consortium provides a report to each local authority's Scrutiny Committee annually and attends a meeting if required;

11. That the Consortium continues to operate under a hosted model, but that the Joint Committee commissions an independent review within the 14/15 financial year of the pros and cons of a hosted model, alongside the development of a school-led system and a move towards a traded function led by schools;
12. That funding arrangements operate through a service level agreement between local authorities and the consortium, with monthly budget briefings supplied to the Executive Board;
13. That a new legal agreement is drawn up to represent the changes as set out above, but which also considers the structural recommendations for the shape of the Consortium, including bringing the LiNKS and SIS functions together under one governance and legal agreement.

### **Section 3: Model of delivery recommendations**

#### *Vision and strategy*

14. The Joint Education Service is currently organised in two sections – the school improvement service and the LiNKS service that is provided in response to commissioned work for schools and other clients. From April 2014 there should be one service designated as a school improvement service.
15. Schools will work together to lead a school to school system of improvement across the region. In practice this will start by developing clusters with other schools with differing outcomes and capacity. Challenge advisors will be deployed around these clusters and increasingly schools will support each other with joint practice development against their school improvement plan.
16. Until such a system is more mature, and remaining alongside the mature school led system, there will be a slim enabling challenge and support process which is targeted sharply at schools with low capacity for improvement.

#### *Challenge advisors*

17. The term system leader will be dropped to be replaced by an alternative such as senior challenge adviser and challenge adviser.
18. There will be a senior challenge advisor responsible for the interface with the local authority and who will be accountable internally for the educational performance of schools within that authority in line with the agreed local commissioning statement.
19. There will be fewer challenge advisors and their number will reduce over time. They will operate within the long term vision of moving towards a school led system but will be deployed alongside high risk schools predominantly whilst also providing statutory performance management of Heads function for all schools.
20. The performance objectives of challenge advisors will be linked to the progress of the schools that they work with.
21. [subject to final budget position. That challenge advisors will hold a budget for schools in categories C and D which they can deploy to facilitate match funding or to enable the swift delivery of support systems as required];

22. There should be an enhanced intelligence, quality and data function that operates on behalf of all local authorities and the consortium.

23. The categorisation process will be brought in line with the national model.

*Commissioning, support and provision*

24. The LiNKS brand will be dropped from April and the current staff will be subject to any agreed restructuring process into either a commissioning function or a small provision function;

25. A small commissioning unit will focus on the identification and development of capacity building support from schools in the region and beyond, from the private sector, consultants and related sources of support.

26. Commissioning will happen by subject specialism so there will be a lead commissioner for each of: literacy, numeracy, leadership, teaching and learning, ICT, poverty, Welsh and 14-19.

27. Support commissioned by the unit will need to pass through a quality assurance process which is led by Heads.

28. The challenge advisors will be responsible for the quality of the support and provision which is commissioned by the commissioning unit as well as how it is implemented within the school. Whilst the head is ultimately accountable, system leaders will be held accountable within the consortium for the delivery of the statement of action throughout the year and the progress made by the school;

29. There will no longer be a 'strategic lead' role held by challenge advisors alongside their challenge advisor function.

30. The consortium will seek to procure school improvement provision in the first instance through commissioning in bulk from existing providers.

31. Over time there may be an appetite to grow an arms-length provider service for the region which is independent of the consortium and full traded. It is judged that the consortium does not, at present, have the capacity to support such a function to develop.

#### **Section Four: Budget**

32. To be developed – dependent on the national funding model for consortia.

#### **Section five: Performance Monitoring**

33. That the performance framework is developed to reflect the performance expectations of the consortium in year, and reviewed with each local authority through the regular stock checks, with the Executive Board and with the Joint Committee annually.